

DAVID HENRY MOHAN

The following is copied from a Composition Book like those used by children in schools. On the cover on the line noted for Grade, he has written "Primer". The writing, in ink, is in a fine, legible hand.

"Cambria, Ill. Sept. 11th 1945. Tuesday.

Willard said not so long ago he would like to have me write down something about my folks, so I am going to try and see what I can remember: My father's name was James, mother's maiden name was Mary George, her mother's maiden name was Abigail Cunningham, and she married Wm. George. My grandmother was a sister of John Cunningham, who was Herbert Farwell's grandfather. He came to the U.S.A and settled in So. Lancaster, near Clinton, Mass. and is buried in the cemetery there. He married a Louisa Rice. I saw her but didn't see her husband.

In our family there were: William Dobin, (there might have been 2 b's in it). He died about the age of 11 yrs. I wasn't born till some years later. James, George, John, Thomas, William, Jane, Archie, David and Eddie, the youngest. All have passed on except Archie and myself.

James went to Pietermaritsburg, Capetown, Natal, So. Africa where he worked as a tutor in the home of a Mr. Cameron, whose son was called Donald. I was quite young at the time he left, might have been 9 or 10 yrs. He stayed there about five years and then came home.

I don't remember the birthdays of all, that is the year. I was of the opinion my birthday was Sept. 28, 1870,

but my brother John got a copy of my birth certificate from the Church in Cushendall and that was Aug. 28th, 1870, so I'm a month older than I thought I was.

Father was a missionary, and early in his married life lived in different places. Some of us were born in Cushendall, some in Glenarm coastal towns in County Antrim. I was told I was about a year old when the family moved to Belfast.

Edmund Alexander, the youngest, was born in Belfast and was five years younger than I. He spent the greater part of his life in Douglas, Isle O'Man, and died there in the summer of 1934. (George, in Belfast, died about 2 weeks from Eddie, although I don't remember which went first.)

Eddie married a Nan _____, can't think of her maiden name. They had one girl, Doreen. Brother James never married and neither did sister Jane.

George married a Bella (I suppose Isabella) Hampton. She kept house for her two brothers, John and Francis. They had a grocery store and went to the same church we did - Trinity. Rev. I.H. Deacon was the minister. Archie and I used to go to their weekday school. So did sister Jane. I remember seeing George married as the school was right alongside the Church and I went in. I don't know how old I was, might have been about 10 yrs. old.

Later on Archie and I went to the Belfast Model National School where we continued til our school days were over.

John married an English girl, she was 22 and he was 44. Nellie is all the name I remember of her. She died in May or June, 1926. I don't remember all their children's names,

but there were, Peggy, Molly, Nellie and Blanch, Douglas and Jack. At least one child, a boy named Bruce, died.

Brother Thomas married an English girl, Annie, but I can't remember her last name. They lived in Sheffield most of their lives, Had a linen shop there near the Cathedral (4 Church St.) till he retired and moved to Scarborough, a coast town and a great summer resort. They had two girls and one boy; Mary, Blanche, and Eddie.

Thomas was on a visit to Belfast to see Brother John. I think they went on a trip to the Isle O' Man where he caught cold and then pneumonia and died in a very short time. He might have been about 77 yrs. of age.

William (Willie) served his time in J.R. Sefton's where George did, to the linen business, in Belfast. They afterwards moved to Newtownards. Willie came to New York, sailing from Larne, on the "State of Nebraska", June 4th, 1887, so lived through the big memorable blizzard of March 8th, 1888. He worked for a Mr. Taylor, a brother of an old Belfast friend, but soon went to Acheson Harden's where he stayed until he couldn't work, was taken ill.

His wife was Annie Vasbinder. They were married in July 1893, when I was home on a visit. They have a son, George V., and a daughter, Kathleen. Willie passed away about Nov. 7, 1940.

Archie married Ella Johnston, whose folks owned a farm at Ballyrainey. Ella wasn't very well; had consumption.

John and Thomas had been traveling in England having sales. They started shops in different towns; had one in

Torquay where Archie went. They had one in Hove near Brighton, where John spent some years. They had one in Sheffield where Thomas stayed after Archie got going in Torquay where he built up a good business. His son Archie carries it on, and has improved it very much.

Ella died and Archie married his assistant, Agnes Honor. Her family came from Cornwall. They had four children, I think: Kathleen, Jack, Bernard and David. Archie had to quit the business, having lost his sight.

I (David) came from Belfast in August, 1888 and lived in Chicago some years. Went up into Alaska in Feb., 1898, landing there in Port Valdez at the head of Prince William Sound on March 4th with a party of seven men. Our outfit was nearly a ton of freight each.

The name of the boat was Rival, a little old lumber schooner refitted. I don't know how many were on board, at least 50, I would think, and perhaps more.

We got our goods across the glacier; was reckoned 5000 feet high and 22 miles from where we landed to the summit and eight miles to timber on the other side. We then pushed inland, packing and sledding our outfit till we reached the Tonsina River, where we built three boats and a large one to take our goods down the river. We were headed for the Copper River and part of the party went out prospecting down the river and part stayed in camp with the goods.

There was very little prospecting done there so after a few weeks the boys came back and soon another party of us

started out in another direction, but found no prospecting so came back to camp.

The summer was getting well along and three of the men had gone back and the balance were about satisfied there wasn't much to stay for. None of them wanted to stay through the winter, and the provisions were hardly adequate for that, so we agreed to sell what we could of our outfit to a man (Eddy, by name) who seemed anxious to get it. So we made the trade. We had to take a check for the amount and wait till we got back to the States. When I did get back to Chicago and presented my check at a bank it was protested and a fee of 7 or 8 dollars was tacked on, but eventually it was paid.

However, we stayed some weeks more before we could start back with what we could pack on our backs as each one felt, as there was the glacier to climb and walk across at a bad time, foggy and drizzling rain, snow melted and water running all under foot. Had to have our ice creepers on. We had a lake to cross and got some men to take us in a boat. It took several hours, then there were a lot of miles tramping before we got to the glacier."

You already know that soon after returning from Alaska, David came to Southern Illinois and married Sadie Kennedy. David's Grandmother Cunningham was a sister to the mother of Cunningham Kennedy, Sadie's father, so David and Sadie were about 3rd cousins.

They met after he wrote them from Chicago and came to Fredonia to visit with them. He returned many times and they planned to marry after he returned from Alaska.

I knew Grandpa from his 65th year on so he was retired from paid work, but always busy. He built the small house (called "the cabin" by him) near the large house. He got the bricks from an old mine building up east of the house. They were carried down by wagon and cleaned and used by him to build his own place. He kept a large garden in the back and had his own well. He even did some canning some years and most of his own cooking, but enjoyed eating with us several times a week.

Reading and writing occupied a good part of his time. There are many copy books filled with his writing, all copies of poems, articles, and items he evidently enjoyed. It seems as if writing them may have been an exercise in penmanship, as well as a way to learn.

I spent a good part of my childhood going in and out of his place and following him around in the garden and about. He frequently read to me, answered endless questions, and listened to my chattering.

I never thought of him as having an accent or being different from others in that small town because I knew him so well. He was quite different though in many ways.

He had a neatly trimmed mustache, walked with a very good posture, and always carried a walking cane. He was a tall, big man with gray hair and piercing eyes, more quiet than his sons, seeming quite reserved.

He created a minor sensation by appearing at the tiny Red Cross office in town and asking Mrs. Spires for a supply of yarn and patterns to join those ladies knitting vests and

gloves for the brave fighting men in World War II. He earned a certificate for the largest number of pieces knitted for that unit! How extraordinary it must have been the first time he appeared.

The fact was that as one of the youngest of ~~the~~ children he was taught to knit when he showed some interest in it. With only one girl to help the mother supply them all with caps and gloves and socks, any help was welcome. He had not knitted since his childhood, but took it right up again. I never considered any of this to be unusual, even when he was the one to teach me to knit, until I left home and learned otherwise.